

RY/21 May 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: (Presumably to be addressed to the
President by the DCI)

SUBJECT: National Crisis Machinery: Suggestions
for Improvement Prompted by the
SS Mayaguez Incident

extra

I. INTRODUCTION*

1. The way in which the Intelligence Community handled problems related to the Mayaguez incident--both in the week or so before, and immediately after, the ship's seizure--is of course a matter which my colleagues (on the United States Intelligence Board) and I still have under review. But we have--as you will see in the paper which follows--looked into a variety of questions raised by this incident fairly extensively. Specifically, we have in recent days examined issues concerning existing crisis machinery, both within the Intelligence Community and without; assessed problems of warning directly related to the Mayaguez incident; identified problems of collection and communications not so associated; and discussed current and projected efforts

* Drafter assumes that a cover note will indicate that this paper (presumably together with an accompanying chronology prepared by NIOs) responds to the Presidential Memorandum of 18 May.

DIA, DOS, & ONI reviews completed

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to invigorate our warning and alerting procedures. Finally, beginning on p. 15, we have assembled our summary statement, including our thoughts on the need to close communications gaps between our intelligence machinery and the related machinery of entities elsewhere in the national community.

II. EXISTING CRISIS INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

The Intelligence Community

2. The Intelligence Community (hereafter referred to as the Community) deals with any given crisis in ways which seem appropriate to the needs of our consumers and to the peculiar demands posed by the events under way. If, for example, we foresee an imminent crisis, ^{will} I send an Alert Memorandum--which contains a brief recitation of the facts as we perceive them and a description of our concerns--to the members of WSAG. The possibility of a Mayaguez-like incident would have been the subject of an Alert Memorandum ^{in fact} had we anticipated hostile Cambodian actions against a US vessel, which we did not (as you know)

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3. It is the responsibility of each of the separate operations and watch centers in the Community to inform its own principal (the Director, DIA; myself; etc.) of the arrival of a crisis, especially if that arrival is announced 

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And, in accordance with procedures agreed upon by USIB early this year, it is also the responsibility of ~~each~~ these centers to inform ^{each} ~~each other~~ immediately if a principal has in fact been notified. A special telephonic conferencing system we call NOIWON was established last year to permit most Community ^{operations/watch} centers (and three centers not in the Community) to do precisely this. Part of the notion here, by the way, is that ^{such} all centers will be encouraged to notify their principals if one center does so.

4. My own role in all of this reflects both my position as the CIA principal and my chairmanship of USIB. ~~The~~, I am informed  by the CIA Operations Center,

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~~but~~ I am not informed by other operations centers, which, indeed, are not charged with that task. At the same time, ~~however~~ ^{however} I ^{seek to} consult with my USIB colleagues, in conference if time permits.

5. Time usually will permit if the crisis we are concerned about ^{with} has passed its initial, instant-action stage. ^{This} ~~which~~ happens at some point in most ^{but} ~~with some~~ crises, ~~though~~ obviously ~~not~~ in the case of the Mayaguez seizure and the rescue of its crew). ^{in this event} USIB will meet and consider, for example, the analyses and ^{estimates} ~~prognostications~~ (e.g., Special National Intelligence Estimates) prepared in concert, with or without dissents, under the aegis of the National Intelligence Officers. Occasionally, if time does not permit ^{formal} USIB consideration, there are ways I have established to permit these same National Intelligence Officers, who are drawn from the Community at large but who work directly for me, to provide uncoordinated assessments to, say, the NSC Staff. (Some other USIB members have established similar channels, and this is generally understood.)

6. There is a special kind of warning which I have not yet mentioned: warning of an impending confrontation between the US and USSR (or some other communist state, including China and North Korea). The major responsibility here lies with my Special Assistant for Strategic Warning, a general officer in the

Defense Intelligence Agency, and his staff, the Strategic Warning Staff, which is headed by a CIA officer.

Outside the Intelligence Community

7. As already suggested, some crisis machinery in the Department of State and in the Department of Defense is related to but quite separate from that in the Community. This machinery, geared primarily to support policymakers and officers in operational assignments, includes:

--In State, the Operations Center and the Secretariat (both of which are supported by INR and, in effect, vice versa);

--In Defense, the National Military Command Center (NMCC) and components of the JCS, principally J-3 (supported by DIA and DIA's National Military Intelligence Center);

--Also in Defense, the Hydrographic Center of the Defense Mapping Agency, which is responsible for issuing Maritime Advisories to the US merchant fleet ~~(more on this subject)~~; | ?

(NOTE to readers of this draft, especially)

Are there any other DOD centers that should be mentioned here? The military services' centers are of course in the Community (original Outline notwithstanding) and are at least implicitly included above and below.

8. Finally, in this itemization of the parts in the crisis machinery, we must also mention the National Security Council itself; the NSC Staff; several senior interdepartmental committees, including WSAG; and the White House Situation Room.

III. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

9. The problems we and others ran into immediately before and after the Mayaguez incident now seem to revolve around two questions: (1) Why was there no warning to US merchant vessels to steer clear of possible trouble spots in the Gulf of Thailand before the seizure of the Mayaguez on 12 May? And (2), in the wake of that seizure, why weren't you, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the USIB principals notified of it immediately?

The Delayed Maritime Advisory

10. As indicated in some of the material (including various kinds of issuances from the National Security Agency) I sent to you on 20 May, the Cambodian Communists began in early May to harass foreign-flag ships. Some of them were in the vicinity of Pulo Wai Island, where the Mayaguez was subsequently seized. Specifically, from early May until that seizure, the Cambodians, in four separate incidents, captured some 15 small craft--many

of them apparently carrying Vietnamese refugees--in areas the Cambodians claim as territorial waters. In addition, in two other incidents, the Cambodians fired on two ocean-going vessels, one South Korean and one Panamanian; both ships were a substantial distance from the Cambodian coast at the time. (See Attachment 1) ← not yet attached

11. Beginning on 4 May, reports of most of these incidents were sent by NSA to appropriate sectors of the Community (CIA, DIA, INR, and the three principal intelligence organizations of the armed services*); to non-intelligence elements in the Defense Department and the State Department; to several** operational military commands. Reports on the South Korean vessel were broadly disseminated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service [redacted] one of these (on the 6th) repeated an English broadcast from Seoul which stated that the government there had issued a "special alert" advising South Korean merchant vessels to watch out for communist attacks "on the high seas of Cambodia."

12. Nevertheless, the seizure of the Mayaguez appears to have caught everyone by surprise. No element of the Community

* This, in re services, needs doublechecking, perhaps by [redacted] and [redacted]

** Also needs checking.

and no element of the Defense Department or of the military services sounded an alarm before that seizure. Nor did the appropriate offices in the Department of State or the Department of the Navy, themselves largely dependent on the flow of intelligence, advise the Hydrographic Center of the ~~Navy~~ ^{Defense} Mapping Agency. ✓
~~And~~ as a consequence of this, the Hydrographic Center, which has no direct links to the Community, was not in a position to issue a maritime advisory to US vessels until two days after the Mayaguez incident. (See Attachment 2) ← not yet attached

13. Behind all this was the failure of the Community's own analysts to perceive the pattern of events building up in the Gulf of Thailand in early May. There were very good reasons, most of us on USIB believe, why they so missed at the time. Inter alia, the pattern was not then nearly so clear as it may seem now, partly because much of the Cambodian activity seemed to be directed against Vietnamese refugees; and the analysts were in any event preoccupied with other major US concerns ^{in the} ~~in~~ Indochina. But miss it they did.

14. An Alert Memorandum was not issued before the Mayaguez incident occurred essentially because of this same analytical

oversight. The National Intelligence Officers who are ordinarily responsible for initiating such memoranda must rely heavily on the ability of the analytical officers in the Community to keep them informed. In this particular instance, the one NIO principally concerned was aware of part of the story but was not privy to the whole.

15. My Special Assistant for Strategic Warning was not directly involved in this crisis (in that capacity), nor was his staff, and properly so. His charter, approved by USIB, does not and is not intended to involve him in instant crises of the character of the Mayaguez seizure; such involvement would only detract from his principal mission vis-a-vis the USSR.

The Problem of Delayed Warning

25X1 16. messages concerning the Mayaguez arrived in the Washington area between 0512 and 0526 EDT on 12 May. I was notified at 0630. According to the best information we can obtain here, Secretary Schlesinger learned of the messages some time between 0700 and 0730; General Scowcroft at 0730. You were informed around 0800; and Secretary Kissinger some time after his regular morning staff meeting had begun at 0800. The State Operations Center, not INR, is charged with alerting the Secretary.

17. Operations centers delayed advising their principals for a variety of reasons, including: (1) concern that information

25X1 [] was inadequate and that further data was needed before principals could be properly briefed; (2) a belief by both intelligence and operations officers that the US would be unable to react immediately with force, and that therefore time was not necessarily of the essence; and (3) related to this, a conviction that principals should not be awakened at home at, say, 0530 or 0600, when they could "just as well" be informed upon their arrival at the office at, say, 0700 or 0730. (CIA operations center officers were aware that I would probably awaken around 0630 and deliberately delayed informing me until about that time. *I am grateful for this ~~only~~ in only one insignificant respect.*)

18. Some other problems, real or potential, have emerged as a result of the Mayaguez incident. NOIWON (the operations centers' conferencing net) was not used, though all the operations centers now agree with us that it should have been. The alerting mechanisms in both DOD and State are divided: operations and intelligence personnel are collocated but serve different principals.

25X1 [] messages arrive, moreover, the INR intelligence officers in the State Operations Center receive them first and are

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responsible for their further dissemination within the Department;

the opposite is true in the Pentagon, where the operations center

(NMCC) is responsible in the first instance [] The

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divisions of responsibility of this character did cause some confusion

minor
and delay on 12 May.

IV. PROBLEMS WHICH TRANSCEND THE ISSUES RAISED BY MAYAGUEZ

19. There are some problems we in the Community face which have been with us in one form or another for some time. Progress has been made in addressing these problems, but the two major ones simply defy facile solutions. The first is associated with the tasking of the means of intelligence collection, especially advanced, technical forms of collection. The second involves communications between separate elements in the Community; between the Community and others obviously involved in crisis warning and crisis management; and even between the Community and others not so obviously involved in crisis management (and the Hydrographic Center of the ~~NSA~~ ^{DMA} is a case in point).

Collection Tasking

20. Difficulties inherent in the direction or guidance of technical collection activities can be illustrated by a brief examination of the capabilities and limits []

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--NOTE: Here, if this lead-in works, would go some material drawn from Kerr's contribution, which, itself (almost in the entire), might constitute an appropriate Annex. (Sorry, once you start writing this way you can't stop.)

--Next, perhaps, some views of the tactical photo-reconnaissance problem, by []

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--And here might go a summary of the material being assembled by [] in re SIGINT.

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21. Questions concerning the role of the Navy in the rather more general problem of collecting information concerning US merchant shipping were spotlighted by the Mayaguez incident.

these questions
But, ~~they~~ have a long and complex history. (Note: This is a

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try at a lead into material which could be drawn from []

essay on this subject, *6* by []

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Communications Problems

22. One of the most critical requirements in warning and crisis operations is to define our own "national nervous system." All major agencies of intelligence, Defense, State, and other non-military departments have 24-hour "watch centers" which receive, produce, and transmit information over many communications

networks. We have produced and distributed a list of 29 of the 24-hour centers in the Washington area. This, however, is not complete or sufficient. Nowhere does there exist a complete, consolidated listing of appropriate centers and how they are interconnected, or not connected. Indeed, a complete directory should probably include centers which do not necessarily operate on a 24-hour basis and which have potential functions in any type of crisis, foreign or domestic.

23. Another communications problem reflects the nature of the flow of information and assessments from intelligence components to specific operational and policy elements of the departments. Stated candidly and in very summary fashion, the existing circumstances--specifically the lack of an identifiable "crisis manager" below Cabinet level--can create some uncertainty and confusion, especially during "instant" crises.

24. The flow of information, or the lack of flow, in the opposite direction, ^{given} into the intelligence maw, can do roughly the same. We understand how difficult it is during a crisis for, say, the Joint Chiefs and the operational commands to service requests for information from people--i.e., those of us in intelligence--who are not charged with the success or failure

of a given military mission. We also understand how the pressures of time, the delicacy of the diplomatic process, and the need for confidentiality can inhibit the flow of information from the Department of State.

25. Still, I can obviously provide information only when I possess it, and especially during crises, I may find that certain categories of information can be found only in departmental intelligence components which I cannot now formally task, much less instruct.

V. ONGOING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE CRISIS WARNING AND REPORTING PROCEDURES IN THE COMMUNITY AND ELSEWHERE

Within the Community

26. Paragraph here re actions initiated by the DCI to improve existing procedures related to: alert memoranda, NOIWON conferencing, and community analyst conferencing. (This being drafted by)

27. Paragraph here re effort to produce single national situation report during crises--stalled by circumstances and communications problems but will live again after CONTEXT in use. (This being drafted by)

28. Paragraph here re efforts under way elsewhere--principally within DOD. (Being drafted by)

VI. SUMMARY STATEMENT

29. In quite general terms, what I have been saying so far seems in some ways to add up to both a charge and an admission: The national security machinery, to which the Intelligence Community belongs, is unwieldy during crises, especially during instant crises like the Mayaguez incident. The responsibility for seeking to make this machinery more responsive to you is certainly in part mine. ~~★~~ I am persuaded that we do not have to scrap existing procedures and systems. At the same time, as I have tried to suggest above, there is a clear requirement for some repairs of existing machinery and, if I may extend the metaphor, a need to install some new auxiliary motors. Further work along these lines would, I profoundly hope, help all concerned to warn of and manage crises in the most effective manner possible.